



Simple stories of reconciliation by Tatiana Vikhareva and Anna Kapushenko

The stories are told by the participants of the School of mediation.

**Dinara Sartbaeva, a leading expert in taxation, Ken-Bulun district administration, Chui oblast:
"So far he has not called me, so he is doing well".**

In May 2011, there was a conflict between two young men in the village of Ken-Bulun. They are both Kyrgyz, but one of them has status of a refugee from Tajikistan and is a member of the "Tajik diaspora". I would like to note that representatives of the "Tajik diaspora" are ethnic Kyrgyz, but natives call them Tajiks, as they are refugees from Tajikistan.

These two young men were originally in conflict with each other. We will call them conventionally "a local" and "a refugee". Once the "local" took the cell phone of the "refugee" by force. The latter wrote a complaint against the former to the police. As a result, the offender was detained by the police. Representatives of the "local" officially turned to me, saying that the "local" has health problems, which aggravated in the detention center. They wanted the "refugee" to retract his complaint. Before that, they went to the Tajik diaspora with threats of the following character: "If your guy does not retract his complaint from the police, we will declare war on you, we will not let you live in Kyrgyzstan!".

I had to work hard, to negotiate, in order not to let the conflict spread and involve other people. First, I tried to know the details of how the conflict had begun, and I found out that these guys had mutual personal dislike. But they involved other people in that, and as a result, a harmless conflict, to the first glance, was about to erupt as "inter-ethnic" confrontation.

I explained that one should not make such threats: "We will not let you live in Kyrgyzstan!", One should not violate the rights of others. I explained how an insignificant problem could grow into a huge conflict that could hurt innocent people, including children.

I suggested these young people to meet together with their parents. At this meeting, we tried hard to bring them to reconciliation. As the police was involved here, it took a lot of time to resolve the conflict. I'm working, so I had to deal with that after work. One day I came home at midnight ...

In the end, all agreed that the cell phone should be returned to the owner, and the complaint should be retracted from the police. The young men promised to no longer be dispute with one another and even apologized in writing.

When everything was settled, I drank tea with them; they thanked me and walked me home. All were satisfied.

I want to visit the "refugee" some day soon, to ask him how he is doing. He has my mobile phone number, in case if someone threatens him again. But so far he has not called me, so he is doing well.

Murat Koshmuratov, chairman of PF «Prevention of drug abuse», Bishkek: "It was a small victory."

Dealing with the Ministry of Social Welfare, we visit lonely people, living in Alamedin district of Chui oblast. On July 1-2, 2011, we were in the village of Vorontsovka, then we arrived in the lower zone. Knowledge of mediation, which I received, helps me a lot. Now I interview elderly people on their social position. And I often find that there are conflict situations with government agencies, district offices of Social care and direct customers, service users – the elderly. I have to act as a peacemaker sometimes.

On Friday, July 1, 2011, there was a quite serious conflict. A controversial question arose last winter, when a veteran of World War II did not receive a bag of charcoal and a bag of potatoes. I had to act as an intermediary between the veteran and the district administration of social protection.

The conflict arose from the fact that the man was included in the list to receive benefits, but he failed to receive them. It was a socially-directed assistance from ayil okmotu (village administration). As it turned out, the staff overlooked something, and this veteran was excluded from the list. He was not included in a new list, because the employee who previously worked in district administration of social protection, quit her job and left for another republic. According to other employees, the list, which was in her computer, was erased from the memory. And they had no hard copy of that list.

The veteran repeatedly appealed to the district office, but in vain. It should be noted that the veteran cannot walk much, his legs are weak, and he has poor health.

I learned about this story and decided to help the respected veteran. We came to ayil okmotu. I listened to both parties. Of course, the parties behaved fairly aggressively. They both believed that they were right. I began to explain that I did not represent anybody, and I was a totally neutral person.

First, we heard the opinion of the pensioner. Then I asked the social care employees to speak. I was fortunate that at that time, as there were several other elderly people who came with the veteran, and they confirmed that he was in critical situation, living under the poverty line.

I asked if there were any regulations that might help that man, because he was not guilty of the fact that the computer had lost its database, and that the person who had been responsible for the lists resigned and left the country. I was told that he should submit an application, and they would consider it within 7-10 days.

Of course, the veteran repeatedly appealed to the representatives of social protection, but in oral form. They did not help him, perhaps, there was not even a willingness to help on their part. There was no desire to look for his missing data in the computer. It should be also remembered that a social worker receives 3100 soms of salary. This salary is scanty, we must remember that there is always turnover of personnel.

We immediately wrote an application on behalf of the veteran. I have experience of working in municipalities, so I helped write the application in a required format. I left my contact phone number both to workers of social protection and to the elderly that were very worried about the veteran's destiny.

Much to our delight, the issue was resolved positively for us, and for the period of preparation for the autumn-winter season 2011-2012, he was already included in the list to receive coal, as well as food packages. Also, he will be given an additional bag of coal and a bag of potatoes.

For me, it was enough to see the tears of gratitude, I do not need any special words. I think it was a small victory, but it was worth it to work in the field of mediation. The skills that Rustem Maksudov taught us during the training program really helped me.

The main thing is that we must be able to listen to and hear both parties, make a pause, sometimes keep silent, sometimes calm them down.

Asylbek Eshiev, head of the "Equal Rights and Opportunities" Center at Osh State Law Institute: "All sighed with relief"

During the trainings, Rustem Maksudov gave us an idea of student reconciliation services. I told everyone at the university about the mediation. Now we are working on a reconciliation service body.

After my short stories about mediation, in early June, the Dean of our faculty contacted me. He told me about a situation with one student. This student would be expelled, because he did not pay for tuition. Upon learning that the university wanted to expel this student, his aggressively minded parents came to the university.

They could not understand that all students had to pay for the tuition. Besides, their son was in conflict with several teachers. He did not attend their classes, so they did not want to evaluate his work. Besides, as it turned out, the student himself went to Russia to earn money.

Parents were confident that the Dean just wanted to settle scores with their son and to expel him, because of personal animosity. The Dean, in his turn, would not quarrel with them and therefore he turned to me.

I met with the parents and described the situation. First, they were careful with me, repeating that they wanted to deal only with the Dean.

I told them that we had a center "Equal rights and opportunities", and what goals we set for ourselves. As a result, they agreed to talk to me. I tried to explain them and convince to pay for the tuition. We also discussed the possibility of transferring their son to part-time plan of study. They found it reasonable, as he missed many classes, due to the fact that he was working.

The tuition was paid for by parents; the student was transferred to part-time study plan. All sighed with relief.

Aida Arapova, Senior Teacher of the Osh State University, Coordinator of the Foundation "Solar country" in Jalal-Abad and Osh oblast, city of Osh: "The girl beamed with joy, her father was proud of her"

It happened in the university. I told everyone that I had attended a course of mediation. Then I held a Round-table discussion on mediation in my university. It yielded results. In early June 2011, a fifth-year student asked for help.

Weeping, she told me her story. A student should have defended her thesis, but her supervisor did not want to allow her thesis to be defended. This student came to the supervisor with her work several times, but the supervisor did not want to see it, screamed at her and sent her to work more on the thesis. I looked through her graduate thesis, it was well-done. I reassured her. I said that I would speak to this teacher. She agreed.

I came to the supervisor and explained to her that as I had attended a mediation course, I was approached by a girl from her group and asked to act as a mediator between them. I asked her to express her view. The teacher said that she really was the supervisor of that group, and this girl was responsible for that group. The girl had to collect money from students for the "sheepskins" of diplomas. But she failed to do so. The supervisor told about it two months ago, but she failed to collect money from all. That's why they had this conflict...

I listened to her and asked, what way out of the current situation she could suggest. She understood me; I had agreed to cooperate, she asked me to help convince students that all money should be collected, because it was a paid service. Students should understand that the money was not intended for her personally.

I also explained to her that the girl came to me, so that I could help her as a mediator. I explained to her the student's situation. Indeed, she did not collect money from all students, but it was not her fault. A teacher should not upset people, because any teacher must control himself.

I persuaded both parties to negotiate with each other. They agreed. We scheduled an appointment at 10:00 AM. The next day at 9 am, this student phoned me and said that her father came and wanted to talk to me. Her father asked me to come. I agreed and came.

It turned out that in the evening, after we had talked, she was strongly worried that her thesis would not be admitted to defense and told parents about the conflict and at the end of the conversation she began to cry. Her father arrived in Osh from Uzgen. Her father was so tense, he was about to go to the police. He said the following: "This is my only daughter, and I cannot bear that she was crying! I will not let anybody hurt her!"

I explained that the situation was not that terrible, that he should not have been so worried and arrived in Osh, because that day the parties were supposed to negotiate and come to reconciliation. I told the father and daughter that they should not have been afraid, that her thesis was written well enough. It was just a matter of misunderstanding.

At 10 o'clock, we all discussed the situation and concluded that the conflict was exhausted. The students who did not submit money for the diploma came to me on that very day. I explained that the money would be really spend for the document design, that one should pay for that service. They all understood it and pay the necessary money. The situation was resolved, the girl was happy.

In the end, she defended her thesis and received the "good" mark. Her father and I, and the whole team were happy for her.

During the negotiations, both parties proposed their views and solutions to this conflict, and in the end, they solved that problem themselves. I was simply sitting there and negotiating, explained that negotiations are built in a way that all must listen to each other, and then try to find common solution. I was pleased that the conflict was resolved: the girl's face beamed with joy, his father was proud of her, and the supervisor was happy that she was able to overcome the negative situation.

Rakhat Shakirova, head of PF "Grace", Osh: "It is much more complicated with the adults, because they are angrier ...».

On the basis of three schools - Uzbek, Russian and Kyrgyz – in Osh, there were created Public reception offices "Children's Ombudsman". In these public offices, we apply the skills of mediation. In April 2011, there happened a conflict in one of these schools. Mother of a boy who was beaten by his classmates applied to us. The boy was beaten because of nationalistic reasons. She knew that I worked with children, and she came up to me to share her problem. She learned from her son that he was beaten. One day he came after school very upset. She began to ask what happened, he did not want to talk about it. But then the boy finally said that his classmates beat him, because he was not a representative of their ethnic group.

The boy was an eight-grade schoolchild of a Russian-language school, his mother wanted to change the school, but it was very hard to do it.

The conflict began because of mean comments on his nationality. Among classmates, there are children who have studied together with him from the first grade, and there are new students, too. He was beaten namely by the new classmates. Children who had studied with him since the first grade, came up to him and said that they did understand his situation, but they were afraid to openly intervene in the conflict. We decided to help this woman. The mother of the boy asked us to help in the most painless way. Our partner in the training center teaches lessons of law, and we included mediation in these lessons of law.

After we had done some work, the boy returned to school. There have not been new scathing attacks against him, he does not complain any longer. In short, the conflict is resolved, the guys began to be more tolerant towards each other. This group of schoolchildren we took as a class at risk and we work with that group. In addition, regardless of whether we have a project activities or not, I appeal to my colleagues, who work in the field of human rights protection, please, take such problem groups as target groups, then the children will not be left out of sight.

We conducted explanatory work with schoolchildren and understood, how important is creation of reconciliation services in schools. Educators, psychologists and the most active guys should work in such reconciliation services. Inter-ethnic problem permeates the relationships between children in schools of Osh, so we are

working to create such reconciliation services in all schools. We submitted a project proposal on the establishment of services of reconciliation, and now we are awaiting the results.

These three schools are pilot ones, there is a certain number of children, with whom we are working. In a short period of time, they have become more trained and they already know the basics of law. If there are conflicts, they may resolve them. These students solve not only problems at the level "schoolchild – schoolchild", but also "schoolchild – teacher", "schoolchild – parent". This helps to combat racketeering, which last year took quite a terrifying character.

I am a member of the NGO "Regional Humanitarian Forum". We had several such cases among employees of the organization. In Osh, there have been conflicts, although dimly expressed, on inter-ethnic basis. It is no secret that nationalism is quite strong in relationships between people now. There is no understanding between representatives of the Uzbek and Kyrgyz ethnic groups. They make fun of each other and use every opportunity to somehow find fault, to humiliate each other. If, for example, some event is held in Russian, but somebody speaks Russian poorly, they can begin to mock at him. Such things happen from time to time, and everything is shown in a negative light. We work with children, and they become more tolerant. But it is much more complicated with the adults, because they are angrier. But I hope that together we will solve this problem.

Kadyrbek Shadybekov, Head of NGO "Hope and Peace", Ak-Tobo village, Aksy district of Jalal-Abad region: "This decision satisfied everybody"

This incident occurred in the village of Ak-Tobo of Aksy district of Jalal-Abad region in June 2011 in a two-story barrack-like house, built during the time of Khrushchev.

An old man, former policeman, lives on the ground floor. A woman with children lives on the first floor. The man has lived in this house for 15 years, and the woman bought an apartment there a couple of years ago. Near the house, there is a small piece of land, about two ares. The man illegally occupied that piece of land to make his garden there, and already planted seedlings. The woman was shocked, because he would not let walk on this site, leaving only a narrow path to exit the house. This created problems for her and her children.

She tried to talk to him, but he did not respond to her requests. He refused to cooperate, arguing that he had been living in this house for 15 years and caring for this land for many years. Another argument was that he had ostensibly bought that piece of land.

A woman came to me, described the problem and asked for help. We started to work out solutions to this problem. I asked her to describe her thoughts on this problem. We have selected the best options.

I looked at the legislation concerning this case. I also decided to find out whether the land belonged to the man. When I started to check the documents, it turned out that he had not any documents for this land. I opened the cadastral plan in the state register and found out that the land, where he wanted to make his garden, is in public occupancy.

The next day, I invited this man to my place. First, I told him about the complaints of his neighbor. He strongly protested at first. He did not want to hear anything. I explained that he illegally seized the land, and if he submitted a complaint to the court, he would lose. At first, he did not want to give this land back, brought all the reasons not to do so, but when it came to the documents, he decided to resolve this situation peacefully. He asked me what he needed to do to solve this situation quietly and peacefully. I suggested talking to his neighbor. He agreed.

The next day in my office, they talked for a long time and developed different solutions. As a result, they reached an agreement that half the site (of land) would remain in the man's ownership as his little garden, and the other half would be used by the woman and her children. This solution satisfied everybody.

Aliyma Sharipova, Director of the Foundation "Culture Plus", Osh: "They began to understand each other".

In the early days of the last summer's conflict in the south of the country, many people left their homes and went closer to the border with Uzbekistan. When they returned, there was a conflict between two neighbors. The cause of the conflict was a banal reproach: why someone left his house, while others stayed and guarded literally everything, even the homes of those who left. Protracted confrontation began between neighbors, which lasted almost six months.

During the quarrels, so many mutual reproaches, claims and charges were made... offensive words "You might as well not come back" were heard quite often...

The neighbors walked the same streets, but did not greet each other. If they had to meet somewhere, they did not even talk to each other. The situation was quite tense.

In this situation, I took part in the "cease-fire" on my own initiative, because I saw that neighbors sometimes behaved too violently. I intervened in the conflict in June of this year, and tried to deeply analyze it. A specific characteristic of it was that the conflicting parties were represented by very young people. I tried to explain both parties that we had to continue to live on one street that nobody would leave again. Just for someone at that time, it was the most acceptable thing to do. People decided to leave, in order to save themselves, their families, children, grandchildren. Someone decided that he could stay and hide, not show up during the day and lead a nightlife. I told the parties that they needed to weigh everything, analyze, because this situation could continue forever.

To resolve this conflict, long conversations were held with each party. Luckily, I succeeded, and now neighbors began to greet each other and became interested in each other's lives. But I cannot say that I have achieved full friendship between neighbors. So far it is impossible. This will be another step, but it needs more time.

The second example concerns a confrontation between husband and wife. The woman, who was in conflict with her husband, told me about this story. The wife believes that her husband did a wrong thing, when a year ago, during the June events, he ran away from home with other women and children. According to her, he should have stayed and guarded the house.

After returning from a refugee camp, where they stayed from mid-June to early August 2010, they had very strained relationships. They could no longer live together; there were constant family scandals, quarrels and mutual insults. The husband constantly reproached his wife, and she cried. His wife, in turn, blamed him, said that he was not a real man, that real man would not run away. This situation lasted for four months. We can say that today, the situation is gradually settled, as the wife begins to understand her husband, the husband also tries to explain that he eventually succumbed to panic, seeing all the burnt houses...

I talked to both parties. I spoke three times to the wife, and one time – to the husband. At present, there are the following achievements: the wife has got a job, she works as a nurse. Her husband also began to work as a private taxi driver. The fact that they are both employed helped them understand each other.

As for my actions, first of all, I listened to both sides. I did not interrupt them, did not try to preach or give other examples. At such moments, it is hard to convince people by other examples; people want to solve only their problems. In the process of negotiations, I asked them not use bad words toward each other, tried to explain to spouses that such negative attitude does not strengthen family ties, that in such a situation unpleasant aftertaste would be only accumulated. As for the parties, they did not interrupt me, they listened to my words. But his wife could not forgive her husband for a long time, and, eventually, he, too, could not restrain himself and told her that he could live peacefully without her...

As a result, the reconciliation process took about six weeks. At present, understanding has been restored in the family. The wife smiles and laughs. I did not expect that I had some qualities of a mediator. And the fact that I do, makes me glad.

Gulnaz Kolsarieva, trainer of PF “Iret”, Osh: “We had to overcome emotions.”

My friends asked me to intervene in a conflict situation, which happened in a company, in which they work. The cause of the conflict was the following: employees of the company could not agree with their superiors regarding the wages for 2 months. The building, where the company is located, required repair. It was planned that the repair works would last 20 days, but they lasted 2 months. Meanwhile, the administration of the company did not sign a contract with employees, and they, in turn, trusted the administration and continued to work. The company decided not to pay its employees wages for those two months. The team of employees replied that they could have worked in another place, but the company did not allow that. This whole situation lasted two weeks. The employees said that they needed someone who would talk to the administration, because the latter did not want to listen to the employees.

I held meetings with each party separately. At the first meeting with staff, we discussed the main issue and identified the reasons for this conflict situation, and how it developed. Then the team expressed their claims to leadership, they also spoke about their requirements and asked to speak with management team of the company.

My second meeting was with the management team of the company. First, they did not want to meet with me, saying that they had no time, but eventually they agreed to the meeting. In the beginning we talked about their work progress in general, and then I raised the main topic of our conversation, I said that employees wanted to settle that conflict peacefully.

In the beginning, the company did not recognize itself guilty. I began to ask them questions that encouraged them to think about what could happen if the situation would not change. In the end, company could be left without staff, and it would be problematic to recruit new staff, because they had a specific type of activities.

During our negotiations, the members of the management team were quick-tempered, emotional. When all the feelings and emotions were exhausted, I explained that impulsive behavior would not help promote a peaceful solution, that one should be calm and soberly look at what the pros and cons. We started looking for a peaceful solution to this issue. In the end, after the talks, both parties met and signed a contract for those two months; the staff received their salaries. Now they continue to work for this company.